

UTILIZING FOLKLORE TO ENHANCE ENGLISH ORAL SKILLS OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

This research aimed at enhancing the speaking skills of the third-grade students at a junior high school in Kefamenanu through the use of folklore and figuring out the students' response toward the implementation of the folklore to elevate their speaking skills. The study employed a pre-experimental design, consisting of three stages: pre-test, treatment, and post-test. Initial findings from the pre-test showed that students had an average speaking skill score of 53.60%, classified as "average." After incorporating folklore as a treatment in the learning process, the post-test results indicated a significant improvement, with an average score increasing to 83%, categorizing students as "very good" (71-85). This demonstrates that folklore was effective in improving students' speaking skills, moving them from an average to an excellent level of proficiency. Additionally, a questionnaire was distributed to find out the students' responses of using folklore as a learning tool. The results revealed that more than 50 percent of the students either strongly agreed or agreed that folklore significantly aided in enhancing their speaking skills. These findings suggest that folklore not only improves students' speaking abilities but also well-received as an engaging and effective instructional method. This research provides insights into the benefits of integrating cultural narratives into language learning, contributing to more effective communication skills development.

Keywords: Folklore, English oral skills, Junior high schools, students

INTRODUCTION

Speaking skill is essential to facilitate effective communication as communication is considered as the fundamental provision in today's world (Akhter, 2021). It is one strand of English skills that requires learner to produce oral utterances at the moment of speaking. Thus, it is vital for learners at earlier ages to learn the skill. Furthermore, Speaking skill not only provides a tool to deliver ideas, information and knowledge but also to acquire frame of mind as well as emotional impact in return (Hameed & Ali, 2022). To better prepare students to engage in speaking activities, key components of speaking are worth considering. The first part is grammar. Grammar is defined as a written rules of a language' structure that helps learners to use English appropriately. A well-structured grammar will produce good and logical sentences. Vocabulary is related to words that are used to express someone's ideas clearly and accurately. Utilization of wide ranges of vocabulary will facilitate better speaking skills of learners. The third aspect is how to pronounce words correctly to avoid misunderstanding of conveyed meaning. Additionally, fluency refers to how smooth an expression or a set of words is uttered with little or no hesitation. It reflects a learners's proficiency in English to keep the flow of a discussion or conversation. Ultimately, comprehensive understanding on utterances said by interlocutors is crucial to sustain logic of a talk.

For junior high school students in Indonesian context, speaking skill is one goal in learning English. Thus, English teachers have applied a wide range of approaches to enable English foreign language learners to improve their oral interaction skill. A study indicated that action learning strategy can facilitate junior high school students to minimize their anxiety so that they can speak confidently (Putra et al., 2021). In addition, project based learning (Alfatihah et al., 2022), video (Muakhiroh & Saadatuddaroini, 2020; Nuriyanti, 2024), drama excerpt (Hidayat & Apriyanto, 2019) are some of the approaches which can enhance oral English skills of EFL students in the level of junior high school.. For third-grade students at junior high schools, mastering speaking skills is fundamental to their future academic journey. However, traditional teaching methods often fail to capture students' attention and stimulate their active participation. Therefore, integrating folklore into language teaching emerges as a promising approach to improving their speaking proficiency.

Some scholarly works have testified the use of folklore in English teaching. The field work of Tineh, Rorintulus & Wuntu (2023) uncovered that there is a correlation between four English language skills and folklore in integrated learning. Therefore, it is recommended to incorporate folklore as a pedagogical instrument to improve EFL students' integrated language skills. Separately, folklore has been applied as a method to improve skill of listening, reading, speaking and writing. Folklores provide students with a narrative story of a specific culture and it is advantageous if the teaching of English skills can utilize folklore from local area. The students can use their background knowledge of folktales from their own places and cultures. As a result, it can help boosting the students' achievement in English learning. Babayeva (2023) mentions that “folklore is a term used to refer to the traditions, legends, myths, songs, dances and other forms of cultural expression of a society or community.” It can be used as a method of learning to assist EFL learners achieve better learning results. As a result, it is significant to look at how folklore used to enable learners improving their oral interaction skills.

One activity to improve speaking skills of English learners using folktale is by storytelling activity. The students can be asked to retell a folklore story in their own words. By retelling folklore stories, students are trained to comprehend content of a story before embarking on their storytelling activities. Implementing folklores in English learning shows significant impact on pronunciation ability of junior high school students, urge students' interest of learning and assist teachers in teaching and evaluate the students' work. Other elements such as teaching approaches variation and students' engrossment also play pivotal roles to trigger the learning success (Daeli et al., 2025). This empirical study focused on aspects of pronunciation and fluency. However, there is no attention given to component of comprehension. Another research focus on improving students' speaking proficiency by focusing on accuracy, fluency and comprehension (Nurhikma, 2022). These three aspects of speaking are assessed from senior high school students which differentiate it from the current study.

Hinged upon facts and background information previously presented, this research has the purposes of enhancing oral interaction skills of students in a public junior high school in Kefamenanu by implementing folklores and figuring out the students' responses toward the method. It is obvious from previous information that notwithstanding a number of field works related to utilizing foklores in speaking skills, there is still a gap to fill, in which not only pronunciation and fluency to be assessed, but also the aspect of comprehension, as well as

different level of students. By comprehending a folklore thoroughly and considering students' level, they can be assisted to be more desirable in retelling folklores.

METHOD

The method used in this study involved pre-experimental research, which included three main stages: pre-test, treatment, and post-test. This design was used to investigate the effectiveness of utilizing folklore in enhancing the English oral skills of a junior high school students in Kefamenanu. This design was selected due to its suitability for preliminary studies conducted in natural classroom settings where random assignment and control groups are not feasible. The design involves administering a pretest to measure students' initial oral skills, implementing the instructional intervention using folklore, and then conducting a post-test to determine any improvements.

The pre-experimental method in this context refers to a research design in which a treatment was given to one group of participants without a control group, and then the results were measured and compared (Ali Bin-Hady et al., 2020). The design is written as follows:

Where:

$$X_1 - T - X_2$$

X1 = Pre-test

T = Treatment

X2 = Post-test

Subsequently, the researchers provided the students with a piece of paper containing the folktale entitled "*The Story of Jaka Tarub*", "*The Seven Nymphs*" and "*The Story of Toba and Samosir Island*". Those stories were chosen because they are well-known Indonesian folktales that are familiar to students, making them easier to understand and more engaging. These stories have clear and interesting plots, which are useful for speaking activities like storytelling. They also contain important moral lessons that encourage students to think and express their ideas in English. In addition, the language used in these stories helps students learn new vocabulary, improve sentence structure, and practice pronunciation. Because of their creative and imaginative content, these stories make learning English more enjoyable and can help students become more confident in speaking.

In this study, the population consisted of all third-grade students at a public junior high school in Kefamenanu, where class IX(A) comprised 28 students and IX(B) comprised 30 students. The selected sample was class IX (B) students, totaling 30 students. Class IX (B) was chosen using a purposive sampling technique because it was identified as a class with relatively low speaking skills. This selection allowed the researchers to target a group that would benefit most from the folklore-based teaching method. By focusing on this class, the present study aimed to address the specific challenge of improving speaking skills in students who were struggling, thereby providing a more accurate assessment of the method's effectiveness. The purposive sampling ensured that the intervention was applied where it was most needed, enhancing the relevance and potential impact of the study's findings. The instruments used were threefold: oral test, treatment, and questionnaire. The oral test was administered before and after the intervention to identify any improvement in speaking skills,

focusing on the aspects of pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension. The treatment involved using selected folklore stories as the basis for various speaking activities designed to enhance oral communication. Lastly, a questionnaire was distributed to gather students' perception regarding the use of folklore in learning English, providing additional insight into the effectiveness and engagement of the method. There were five questions in the questionnaire which covers several important points. The first point is with respect to whether the students agree with the use of folklore in speaking activity. Second, the students are asked to give information on how much their motivation increases by the use of folklore in their speaking activities. The third question would like to know if discussing folklore can assist the students to enhance their speaking skills. Question number four positively links the use of folklore with vocabulary improvement. The last question seeks to comprehend the students' opinion concerning positive effect of folklore in facilitating the learning of speaking skills.

Data analysis procedures

To obtain data on students' interest in learning speaking through folklore and determine the percentage of students in questionnaire assesment as well as in speaking assessments, the researchers applied the following formula:

$$X = \frac{\sum X}{N} \times 100\%$$

Where:

$\sum X$ = Mean

$\sum X$ = Individual Score

N = Number of students

Where:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

P = Percentage of the students' responses

F = The frequency of the students' responses

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section embraces two main parts mentioned as presenting data related to the results and discussing it with other similar or different findings. Each of them was indistinctly illustrated.

Findings

There are some points to be presented in this part, namely, result of pre-test, post test and questionnaire. To provide clear description, each part is supplied with tables.

Pre-test

In this section, the researchers first displayed complete scores of the students in speaking skills on the aspects of pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility. Furthermore, the mean score, standard deviation, and the rate percentage of the students' speaking skills were presented. Table 1 illustrated pre-test grades on speaking skills of the students from the three aspects of speaking previously talked about, while percentage on the students' pre-test scores was displayed in table 2.

Table 1. The pre-test scores of the students' speaking skill based on pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility

S	The Aspect of Speaking Skills			Total	Score	Scale
	P	F	C			
S1	4	2	4	10	60	56-70
S2	3	2	3	8	48	41-55
S3	3	2	3	8	48	41-55
S4	3	2	3	8	48	41-55
S5	4	3	4	11	66	56-70
S6	3	2	3	8	48	41-55
S7	4	4	4	12	72	71-85
S8	3	2	3	8	48	41-55
S9	4	4	4	12	72	71-85
S10	4	3	4	11	66	56-70
S11	3	2	3	8	48	41-55
S12	3	3	3	9	54	41-55
S13	3	2	3	8	48	41-55
S14	3	3	3	9	54	41-55
S15	3	2	3	8	48	41-55
S16	3	3	3	9	54	41-55
S17	4	4	4	12	72	71-85
S18	3	3	3	9	54	41-55
S19	3	2	3	8	48	41-55
S20	4	3	4	11	66	56-70
S21	3	2	3	8	48	41-55
S22	3	2	3	8	48	41-55
S23	3	2	3	8	48	41-55
S24	3	2	3	8	48	41-55
S25	3	2	3	8	48	41-55
S26	3	2	3	8	48	41-55
S27	3	3	3	9	54	41-55
S28	3	2	3	8	48	41-55
S29	3	2	3	8	48	41-55
S30	3	2	3	8	48	41-55
N=30				268	1.608	
Mean					53,60	

$$X = \frac{\sum X}{N} \times 100\%$$

$$X = \frac{1.608}{30} \times 100\%$$

$$X = 53,60\%$$

Table 2. The rate percentage score in the pre-test

Classification	S	R	Frequency			Percentage		
			P	F	C	P	F	C
Excellent	86-100	6	-	-	-	-	-	-
Very Good	71-85	5	-	-	-	-	-	-
Good	56-70	4	7	3	7	23,30%	10%	23,30%

Average	41-55	3	23	8	23	76,66%	26,60%	76,66%
Poor	26-40	2	-	19	-	-	63,33%	-
Very Poor	≤25	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total		30	30	30	100%	100%	100%	

Table two indicates the percentage of the students' scores in the pre-test. Pertinent to pronunciation, it is shown that none of the students obtains excellent (0%) and very good (0%) scores. Moreover, there were 7 students (23,30%) who obtain good score and 23 students (76,66%) who obtained average score. It is also interesting to note that no students gained poor and very poor (0%) scores. Afterward, with regard to fluency, the table shows that none of the students gains excellent and very good (0%) scores. Following that, there were 3 students (10%) who gain good and 8 students (26,60%) who get average mark. Next, there are 19 students (63,33%) who obtain poor and the last is no students got very poor (0%) scores. At a later stage, in the comprehensibility component, it is shown that none of the students (0%) gained excellent and very good level. Meanwhile, there were 7 students (23,30%) who earned good marks and 23 students (76,66%) had average scores. At last, none of the students acquired poor and very poor (0%) grades.

Post-test

In this section, the researchers presented and tabulated the mean scores and the percentage of the students' speaking skills individually. All of these were elaborated more clearly in Table 3 and 4. The total score of the post-test was 2.490. Thus, the mean:

$$X = \frac{\sum X}{N} \times 100\%$$

$$X = \frac{2.490}{30} \times 100\%$$

$$X = 83.$$

Table 3. The scores of the students' speaking skill on pronunciation, fluency, and comprehensibility in the post-test

S	The Aspect of Speaking Skills			Total	Score	Scale
	P	F	C			
S1	5	5	5	15	90	86-100
S2	4	5	4	13	78	71-85
S3	4	5	4	13	78	71-85
S4	4	5	4	13	78	71-85
S5	5	6	5	16	96	86-100
S6	4	5	4	13	78	71-85
S7	5	6	5	16	96	86-100
S8	4	5	4	13	78	71-85
S9	5	6	5	16	96	86-100
S10	5	6	5	16	96	86-100
S11	4	5	4	13	78	71-85
S12	4	5	5	14	84	71-85
S13	4	5	4	13	78	71-85
S14	4	5	5	14	84	71-85
S15	4	5	4	13	78	71-85
S16	4	5	5	14	84	71-85
S17	5	6	5	16	96	86-100

S18	4	5	5	14	84	71-85
S19	4	5	4	13	78	71-85
S20	5	6	5	16	96	86-100
S21	4	5	4	13	78	71-85
S22	4	5	4	13	78	71-85
S23	4	5	4	13	78	71-85
S24	4	5	4	13	78	71-85
S25	4	5	4	13	78	71-85
S26	4	5	4	13	78	71-85
S27	4	5	5	14	84	86-100
S28	4	5	4	13	78	71-85
S29	4	5	4	13	78	71-85
S30	4	5	4	13	78	71-85
N=30				415	2.490	
Mean					83	

Table 4. The rate percentage score in the post-test

Classification	S	R	Frequency			Percentage		
			P	F	C	P	F	C
Excellent	86-100	6	-	6	-	-	20%	-
Very Good	71-85	5	7	24	12	23,30%	80%	40%
Good	56-70	4	23	-	18	76,66%	-	60%
Average	41-55	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Poor	26-40	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Very Poor	≤25	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total			30	30	30	100%	100%	100%

Based on the calculation, it was found out that there was a significant improvement on the students' speaking performances from pre-test to post test, that is 53,60 to 83. This implies that the students' speaking scores in the pre-test, after treatment and post-test was on the scale 5, which is very good (71-85). Thus, it can be concluded that folklore significantly improves the students' speaking skills from average (41-55) to excellent (86-100) category. These findings demonstrate that folklore was effective in significantly improving students' speaking skills of third grade students at SMPN Kota Baru Kefamenanu, as evidence by the substantial improvement from the pre-test to the post-test.

Questionnaire

Outcome of the questionnaire demonstrated that more students chose "strongly agree" and "agree" toward five questions that were posed to them. This information implied that the students' responses in learning using folklore to improve their speaking skills is positive. This finding addressed the second research question that has been previously formulated. To provide clear understanding on the result of the questionnaire, the following tables are displayed.

Table 5. The students' responses to the method of Folklore

No	Statement	Tool of choice	Frequency	Percentage
1.	I agree with the use of techniques folklore in learning speaking	Strongly Agree	15	50%
		Agree	10	33%
		Disagree	5	17%
		Strongly Disagree	-	-

Total	30	100%
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Table 6. The students' motivation in improving speaking skill through folklore

No	Statement	tool of choice	Frequency	Percentage
2.	My motivation in learning speaking increase after I used the technique of folklore	Strongly Agree	20	60%
		Agree	10	40%
		Disagree	-	-
		Strongly Disagree	-	-
Total			30	100%

Table 7. Enhancement of the students' skill in speaking through folklore

No	Statement	tool of choice	Frequency	Percentage
3.	Discussing an interesting topic in folklore can help me to improve students speaking skill	Strongly Agree	20	60%
		Agree	10	40%
		Disagree	-	-
		Strongly Disagree	-	-
Total			30	100%

Table 8. The effect of folklore activities for vocabulary development to facilitate the students' speaking skills

No	Statement	tool of choice	Frequency	Percentage
4.	By the activities of folklore, I can memorize a lot of vocabulary	Strongly Agree	5	16%
		Agree	25	84%
		Disagree	-	-
		Strongly Disagree	-	-
Total			30	100%

Table 9. The students' opinion on the implementation of folklore to assist them learning English

No	Statement	tool of choice	Frequency	Percentage
5.	Learn speaking with folklore is a very nice method	Strongly Agree	10	33%
		Agree	15	50%
		Disagree	5	17%
		Strongly Disagree	-	-
Total			30	100%

Table five indicates that there were 15 students (50%) chose "strongly agree", 10 students (33%) chose "agree", 5 students (5%) chose disagree and no students (0%) chose "strongly disagree". It implied that the students' attitude in learning speaking through folklore is very good. Table six indicates that there are 20 students (60%) chose "strongly agree" and 10 students (40%) chose "agree". On the other hand, none of the students (0%) chose disagree and strongly disagree. In table seven, most of the students, that is 20 students (60%) chose "strongly disagree", 10 students (40%) chose "agree" and no students (0%) chose "disagree" and "strongly disagree." Table 8 demonstrated that there were 5 students (16%) chose "strongly agree", 25 students (84%) chose "agree" and no students (0%) chose "disagree" and "strongly disagree." Ultimately, 10 students (33%) chose "strongly agree". 15 students (50%)

chose “agree”, 5 students (17%) chose “disagree” and no one (0%) chose “strongly disagree” in table nine.

Discussion

This study presented several key differences from previous research on using folklore to enhance students' speaking skills. Unlike the empirical work of Daud, Abdul & Burhanuddin (2021) who focused on Enrekang folktales and demonstrated improvements in speaking confidence and skills among high school students, this study targets younger students, third graders at a junior high school in Kefamenanu. Daud, Abdul & Burhanuddin's research showed a significant increase in speaking scores, but it primarily explored the impact on older students, which may not directly translate to the younger demographic. Similarly, Malla (2022) investigated the effectiveness of the jigsaw technique with Luwu folklore for second graders, showing positive results in speaking skills but using a different method of delivery. This study, in contrast, directly applies folklore as a treatment without additional techniques, offering a more focused examination of folklore's intrinsic benefits.

Additionally, Pricilia & Rahmansyah (2022) examined the effect of folktale-based storytelling at a higher education level, showing significant improvement in speaking abilities. This research was conducted with university students, whose language learning needs and contexts are different from those of younger students in junior high school. By focusing on third graders and using culturally relevant folktales, this study narrows its scope to early language development, providing insights into how folklore can specifically aid younger learners at a critical stage of language acquisition.

The use of "Jaka Tarub and the Seven Nymphs" and "The Legend of Toba and Samosir Island" as treatments in this study offers unique advantages. "Jaka Tarub and the Seven Nymphs" involves magical elements and a narrative rich with dialogue, which is particularly engaging for younger students. The story's clear plot and character interactions offer numerous opportunities for students to practice speaking in a dynamic and imaginative context. This type of storytelling allows students to engage in role-playing and dramatization, which helps build their fluency and confidence in a supportive environment.

Moreover, "The Legend of Toba and Samosir Island" introduces students to themes of cultural heritage and morality. The emotional depth and moral lessons embedded in this story provide a platform for students to discuss and express their thoughts on various themes, which enhances their ability to articulate complex ideas. The vivid and relatable setting of the story also helps students to connect emotionally with the content, making their speaking practice more meaningful and engaging.

To sum up, this study distinguishes itself from previous research by focusing on younger students and employing specific folktales as a treatment for improving speaking skills. The use of "Jaka Tarub and the Seven Nymphs" and "The Legend of Toba and Samosir Island" not only enriches the students' cultural knowledge but also offers interactive and compelling content for practicing language skills. The significant improvement in students' speaking scores suggests that incorporating culturally relevant folklore can be highly effective in enhancing language proficiency at an early educational stage, providing a valuable contribution to the field of English language education.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Refer to the research findings, first conclusion can be drawn that the use of folklore significantly improved the speaking skills of the third grade students of a junior high school in Kefamenanu. The pre-test results showed that the students' average score is 53,60, which increased significantly to 83 in the post-test after the implementation of folklore. That indicates a remarkable improvement from the "average" to the "excellent" category. Second, the students' responses in learning using folklore to improve their speaking skills also showed notable progress. Almost all of the students chose "strongly agree" and "agree". Therefore, folklore proved to be an effective method to improve the students' English oral skill.

In addition, some suggestions for English teachers, students, and future researchers were provided with respect to the findings of the research. The English teachers should consider incorporating folklore into their teaching materials to improve students' speaking skills. Folklore provided engaging and relatable content that can motivate students to read more and improve their speaking skills. Further, the students are encouraged to read folklore regularly as an instrument to practice and improve their speaking skills. Folklore are not only enjoyable but also beneficial in improving the skills of speaking. For next researchers, it is recommended that they should explore the use of different types of folklore and combine them with other speaking materials to scrutinize their effectiveness in improving not only speaking skills, but also other skills. It would also be beneficial to study the long-term effects of using folklore on students' speaking development.

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